

THE THRONE ESTABLISHED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED IN

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, TORONTO,

ON THE 21TH OF MAY, 1863.

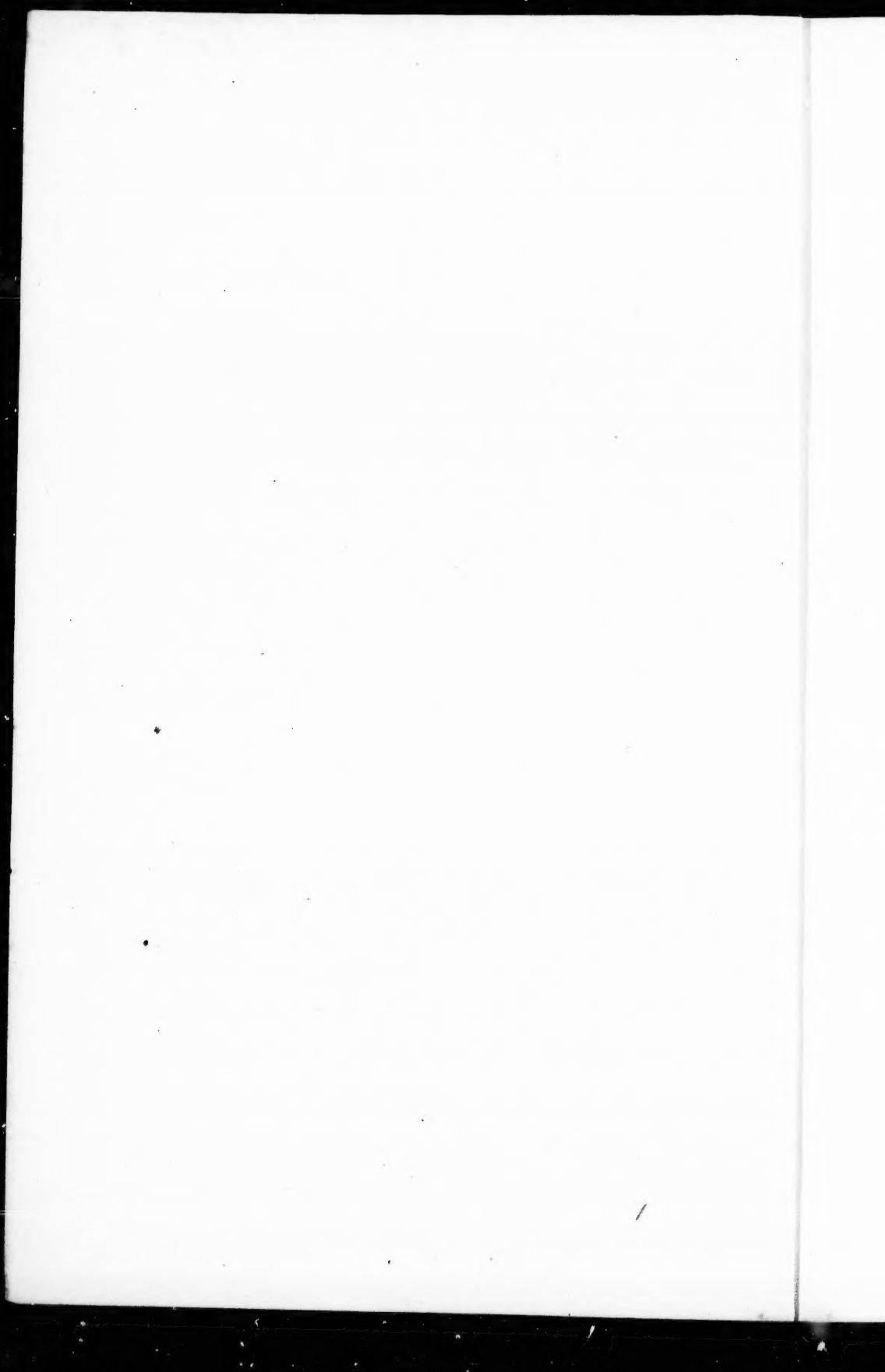
BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH-DAY OF HER
MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY

QUEEN VICTORIA.

BY JOHN BARCLAY, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

TORONTO :
PRINTED BY LOVELL AND GIBSON.
1863.



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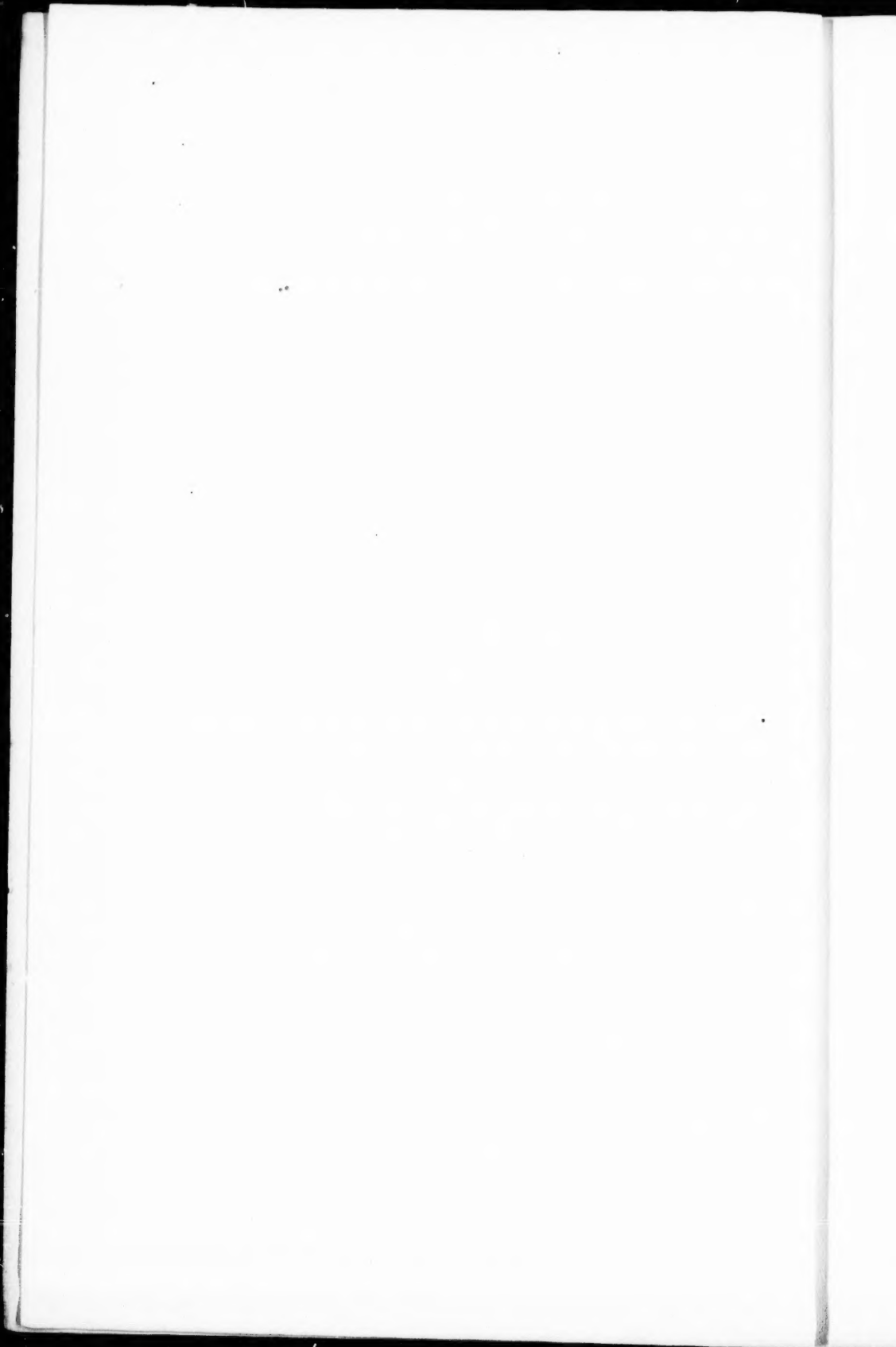
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PROVERBS xvi. 12 :

"The throne is established by righteousness."

So spake the 'wise man' in one of those short but comprehensive utterances in which he presented, with such force and clearness, so many important truths for the instruction and guidance of his fellow-men. Himself the occupant of a throne, in his mouth the text was peculiarly appropriate. Versed, as he was, in the duties pertaining to the high station of a ruler over others—possessing the riches and honours of royal state in no small measure—knowing well the weighty responsibilities of a position so exalted among men—not ignorant of its perils and temptations—wisely judging as to what was, and what was not, inherent in the emblems and honours of royalty;—Solomon may well be regarded as speaking with authority, because with a personal knowledge of the subject, when he

declared that "the throne is established by righteousness."

Not only is this the utterance of wisdom in the mouth of the wisest of men, but it is also the declaration of wisdom *directed and regulated by the Spirit of God*—by whose inspiration the sentiment was recorded for the admonition of mankind in all succeeding ages of the world.

The text I take to rest on the general principle that the possession of power or prominence bears with it corresponding responsibility as to the influence it diffuses, and that an indispensable element of true greatness is *goodness*.—Righteousness, which adds dignity to any station, whether high or humble—gives stability to thrones when they rest on it—and is, after all, the best ornament of rank and the truest of kingly graces. And if it be that theme, it may not be an inappropriate subject of discourse this day, in which we hail the return of the anniversary of the birth-day of the honoured Sovereign of this great empire,—which under her benign sway has been so signally blessed by Him by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice." The representative of a long line of monarchs, who, by the divine favour, have successively presided over the varying fortunes of a people that has long occupied a foremost place among the

nations,—the honours of a long line of royal ancestry have never been more worthily borne, for the happiness of her people or for the good of the world at large. To no small extent is it owing to the fact of the throne being “established by righteousness,” that the British sceptre is so gracefully swayed; and because the Royal Lady to whom we owe allegiance has added to her high ancestral honours the lustre of many princely virtues and Christian graces.

The outward pomp and circumstance of regal authority may be the features which stand out prominently to the eye that takes a superficial view of the thrones and sceptres and diadems of earthly dominion. But the glory of true royal dignity rests on something greater and better than these. If royal honours fall on the unjust and cruel despot, who usurps an authority in whose exercise he seeks only the indulgence of his own passions; and who deals out wrongs on trembling subjects, crouching in abject wretchedness beneath his unjust and cruel sway:—if power be possessed that it may be abused and made the instrument of public outrage and of private wrongs,—it may be in the hands of King or Emperor, President or Governor; whatever be the *name* or *form* in which the supreme civil authority is vested,—if there be wanting

the moral ingredient of rectitude which renders power "a terror to evil-doers and the praise of such as do well," it lacks the chief element of stability and of excellence whereby it should be distinguished. It may dazzle the eye, and draw forth the admiration, of inconsiderate observers to gaze, in stupid wonder, on the mere external glare and glitter of Royalty, though destitute of the higher element of moral rectitude that gives it solidity and worth. But if constitutional liberty have no place in the laws that govern, nor be respected by the hands that administer public affairs—if wickedness triumph in high places, and righteousness be there despised,—what woes await a nation with the forms of law and the fountain of power and influence thus made the source of wrong! It is righteousness alone that is the true support and safeguard of nations; righteousness both *on* the throne and *around* the throne, and extending through all ranks of the commonwealth; righteousness moulding and founding the constitution; righteousness making and, when needful, amending the laws; righteousness dispensing justice among the people, and administering the affairs of the body politic; righteousness ever seeking, and labouring to secure, the triumph of truth and godliness among men!

Look upwards to that highest of all thrones—the Throne on which He sits who in divine Majesty rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. The hand that holds the Heavenly sceptre wields all the resources of omnipotence; and in comparison with that might and majesty which surround the throne of God, how puny are all the sceptres of the princes and potentates of the earth! In presence of the sceptre of Him who ruleth over all, the power and glory of the nations are but vanity! Yet even of God's throne it must be said—reverently be it spoken, but unequivocally may it be declared—that even *it* has its limits; that there is a region of evil and injustice into which it does not and cannot enter, to be a partaker in wrongdoing. For its highest glory is that “a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of God's kingdom.” That His power is directed in its exercise by a righteousness that never swerves from what is holy, and just, and good. Doubtless it is true of Jehovah, the Governor of the nations, that what it *pleaseth* him he hath done. But then it pleaseth Him ever to work only righteousness. That is an element of His very being—an attribute from which He can never be separated.

The most terrible idea, indeed, that can be formed of a being wielding omnipotence is, that

he may be exercising power dissociated from righteousness—power working out only evil; or to whom good and evil are alike indifferent. It is the idea that is embodied to a large extent in the Evil-one, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Well is it for weak and fallible man that it is not *omnipotence* that is allied to satanic devices of evil—that there is a stronger than this “strong man armed” to thwart his evil purposes, and to deliver men from his snares; and that against the cause of truth and righteousness the gates of hell shall not prevail.

What gives stability to the throne of God, and renders it a blessing to the universe—yea the source of all blessings to the creatures of His hand—is, that it is a throne founded on righteousness; that though “clouds and darkness be round about that throne, justice and judgment are the habitation thereof.”

It is to this very element of righteousness, which renders the throne of God so glorious, that men are called to trust, as giving the truest dignity to earthly thrones and dominions, in that measure in which the *human* may copy the *divine*. In its due manner and in such degree as may be reached by human endeavour, is it said to the children of men, “Let the throne be established

by righteousness." Let this be the ornament brightest and best among the gems sparkling in the Crown that graces the Monarch's head. Let this be the bond that unites prince and people—ruler and ruled. Let this be the common aim to which are consecrated the hopes, the efforts, the prayers of all, that the Throne be established by righteousness—that "righteousness which alone exalteth a nation,"—to the discouragement and exclusion of "sin which is the ruin of any people." To a result like this the efforts of all must contribute. Righteousness must have its triumph over every form of iniquity and evil; not in lordly halls only, but in lowly abodes; not only in the royal palace, but also in the humblest cottage in the land. It must pervade the entire mass of the people, to make the nation what it ought to be.

This is the support which communities must give to the supreme Magistrate, that he may be "the minister of God for good;" and that this good may be commensurate to the wants of the nation, thus blessed with righteousness, both in high and low. Think you, that for subjects to exact righteousness the most extensive and unswerving from the occupant of the throne, and yet to manifest no righteousness on their own part, and to cherish no desire to culti-

vate it in their own breasts, can ever be a true response to the demand of the text? Censorious enough men can sometimes be with reference to the defects, real or supposed, of princes and those in lofty stations; and yet how often does unrighteousness triumph in their own breasts,—in the malice, and wrath, and evil-speaking—in the uncharitableness and wrong-doing with which themselves are chargeable!

There must be the *nether* as well as the upper sources of this stability of thrones; the virtues of the people as well as of the sovereign; the integrity of the community as well as the uprightness of their rulers. Good indeed it is to seek and pray that the throne may ever be established by righteousness adorning the head that wears the Crown. Happy the people who can rejoice over the fulfilment of hopes and wishes that contemplate a result like this! So that from the highest seat of authority in the land, a healthful example of reverence for goodness, and of a regard for uprightness, may go forth, with many lessons to influence others in the way of righteousness. But chiefly to be valued is the *general* diffusion of high-toned, moral, and Christian integrity, which, leavening the entire community, may preserve the nation from degradation and decay. As a living buttress to the throne, to

complete and maintain in symmetry and beauty the noble structure of national greatness, an upright and virtuous people are the source of a nation's strength. And when the graces which adorn the throne are reflected and multiplied in the response that comes largely from the people to the claims of righteousness, happy is that nation which is in such a state : It is *established by its righteousness*.

Thus it is that we derive a striking testimony to the value of true Religion, which is to us the standard and teacher of righteousness. Why should the simple announcements uttered by Jesus, as the great Teacher sent from God, be of such lasting importance that they should continue to this hour to be the great theme of the Pulpit, to which all classes of mankind are called to give heed, as unto things worthy of all acceptance? Why should the words that arrested the ear of the common people in the temple at Jerusalem, and in other places of public resort, as they fell in persuasive utterance from His lips eighteen centuries ago, be still so fitting subject of discourse? Why should truths spoken in the wilderness of Judea, in the villages of Galilee, by the waysides of Samaria, by Jordan's banks, or on Gennesaret's busy shores, be still worthy to be re-echoed from land to land, and to reach even

the distant islands of the sea? Why should the holy musings of that mysterious dweller in Patmos' lonely isle—who told of visions of unutterable things—be of so vast importance to us even now as they are tending on towards their elucidation and fulfilment? Why should the earnest pleadings of a Peter, the bold and lofty reasonings of a Paul, or the affectionate sayings of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," be still as full of instruction, of hope, and of blessings to the children of men, as when from Apostolic lips they were first spoken in vindication of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why! but just because truth is eternal; and the Divine truths thus recorded carry with them claims, and privileges, and blessings that are fitted to exalt our race to the true dignity of their restored birth-right of sons of God. So that to every one it may be said,—Despise not these sayings of Christ and his apostles; neglect not those writings of Moses and the prophets. They may be old truths, but in their hoary antiquity they retain their freshness, and are indued with a vitality that can never die. Fragrant with the sweets that are wafted from the Paradise whence they have come, they flourish still with blossoms of hope and with full crops of blessings for the children of men, that whosoever will may pluck of the fruit of the

tree of life, and eat for the nourishment of his soul. And now, as at the first, you are exhorted to "have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."—"Continue steadfast in the apostles doctrine."—"Be ye followers of Christ as dear children, and walk in love."—"Run with patience the race set before you."—"Live godly in Christ Jesus, "for godliness hath promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The theory of a nation prosperous and stable, implies a concord of sentiment and harmony of effort for the general good, by each individual laying hold of that integrity, and promoting in his own procedure, and in the sphere in which he moves, that righteousness by which nations are exalted. More prominent and more evident in stations of influence may be the opportunity of thus advancing the public good; but there is no station, however humble, from which the obligation to consult it is excluded. And the great principle laid down in the text, as fitted to secure that end, is a principle of universal application. Wherever there are minds to devise and hands to do; wherever thought and action can be developed and devoted to practical ends,—let it be in the direction of righteousness. Let righteous motives influence all, and righteous aims animate all; and righteous means be ever employed, by

each in his own sphere and in the contribution he thus makes to the formation of the national character; and then, as a natural result, the Throne, as representing the national interests, shall be established by righteousness. Thus it is that the nation triumphs in the virtue of its sons.

In humble cottage-homes, that lie thickly scattered throughout the land, priceless in its worth, even for that end, is the piety which enriches and gladdens with its many blessings the lowly sons of toil; so that a virtuous peasantry becomes a nation's safety. And from each dwelling, in the personal virtues of its occupants, there comes an influence that contributes its part to the upholding of the throne that "is established by righteousness." The obligation rests on all, whatever be their calling, thus to extend and perpetuate the claims of righteousness. The child in obeying his parents in the Lord—honouring his father and his mother, which is the first commandment with promise; the parent, in bringing up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: The servant, in being obedient to his master according to the flesh, in singleness of heart as unto the Lord; the master, in exacting only what is just and righteous, as knowing that his Master also is in heaven, and that God is no respecter of persons: The artizan,

in his workshop, applying his skill to the intricate objects of his handicraft, and yet content with the just reward of his honest labour: The merchant at his desk, or from the marts of trade sending forth the streams of commerce to distant shores, and drawing thence the golden returns which contribute to the nation's wealth; yet letting righteousness regulate all his operations, so that integrity and honourable dealing may be seen to distinguish his every enterprise—in the honesty of purpose with which he applies himself to his vocation, he is contributing his share to uphold the national character and to maintain the public probity: and thus he helps even to “establish the throne by righteousness.” So the politician, who, throwing aside mere personal ends, seeks from high and honourable motives the advancement of the public interests: The legislator, who takes an honest part in wisely framing the laws by which the community are restrained from wrong-doing, and directed and protected in their rights: The statesman, who, in his more onerous and responsible official position, holds the helm of public affairs and steers the ship of State, through storm or calm as they come, but ever keeping his eye on righteousness as on a compass, to guide him in his course of far-seeing aims and of wise and upright efforts

for the public good :—these, in their varied spheres of action, in seeking the triumph of truth and right, are in reality labouring in their several departments for the advancement of interests that tell for good on the general prosperity, and all combine to secure the great object set forth in the text, of “establishing the throne by righteousness.” So when justice is impartially dispensed to rich and poor alike, the highest interests of nations are upheld, and their true dignity and honour promoted. And the upright judge, who intelligently and impartially administers the laws, impelled thereto by a high regard for the maintenance of right and justice; and who, in bearing the “sword of justice,” shrinks not from rebuking fraud and punishing wrong,—he too takes his part, and that no unimportant part, in the great duty of “establishing the throne by righteousness.”

To be concerned in any way in upholding an upright throne—in defending and perpetuating the blessings of true liberty, guarded by the bulwark of constitutional freedom, is, of all temporal obligations, a duty the most sacred—a privilege the most valuable and honoured among men. It is to do homage to eternal truth ! It is to uphold by righteousness the embodiment of the power, honour, and influence of the nation

for good and valuable ends ! It is to honour God, by whom kings reign ; and to walk in the way which religion points out. So, too, to defend—though it be amid toils and perils, danger and death on the tented field—the throne thus established by righteousness ; to guard with jealous care the national honour when assailed by foes however numerous ; to rush to the rescue of interests of country and of race, for which it is honourable to suffer and glorious to die ;—this is what consecrates the profession of arms to noble objects, and covers the warrior with immortal fame. If that light of freedom which burns so brightly on the altar of British liberty, and which has so long shone forth as a beacon to guide the nations in their onward progress towards what is great and free, were now to be extinguished through the unfaithfulness of its guardians or the pusillanimity of its defenders, whither should men turn for a substitute ! Not to spurious imitators, who invoke the sacred name of Liberty, but on the first temptation repudiate her safeguards, and employ or embrace the manacles of incipient tyranny ! Rather, in such a case, let it be to the memory of a past renown, whence there may be drawn the inspiration of departed glories. But as it is, in the full enjoyment of such a multitude of national bless-

ings, let us acknowledge what is due to those of former times, who sowed that we might reap so rich a harvest of benefits as now, by the divine favour, encompass us as a people. And let us honour the heroes of our fatherland, who in times of peril were true to their country, and guarded the shrine of her liberties with intrepid breasts and strong right arms; and who, having defended her in times of trial with their lives, have handed down to us the goodly heritage of freedom, which, while the nation lasts, never may proud despot arise to subvert nor libertine to destroy!

Fortunate indeed it is when it is *really* in support of a throne resting on righteousness that the efforts of noble defenders are invoked. Let our sympathies ever surround such a patrimony, and our efforts be ever responsive to the call that summons us to its defence in the hour of need—that so great a heritage of blessings may ever be ours to hand down in its integrity to the generations that are to follow. Even here, at this distance from the centre and seat of the national authority, we may take our part in upholding the throne, by the faithful discharge of all the duties, sacred and civil, that devolve upon us. In our own sphere we can, as a people, dip our torch in the sacred fire that glows in the temple of

British freedom; and if we think we can so trim the lamp of liberty as to cause it to give forth even a brighter radiance in this new land, so be it. But let us ever, as our first care, maintain with fidelity that righteousness on which our Queen's throne rests, and by which civil authority is upheld, for the security of the State and the good of the people at large.

A throne established by righteousness! Surely if ever amid the imperfections of earth this has been presented to the eyes of men, it has been in unwonted measure by that Royal Lady whose womanly virtues have shed a brighter lustre on the throne than mere rank could give. It is an instructive and a worthy homage which righteousness commands as its due, when, in preference even to royal dignity, it is the personal excellences of our good Queen that draw the admiration of other nations, who see in her queenly virtues a glory which crowns all other glories of her prosperous and happy reign.

For those excellences which stamp the British constitution as the palladium of true liberty—a safeguard to her own people in their peaceful homes, and a model to other nations which seek to be great and free—credit may not be due to the reigning monarch; for it was to the throne of a free empire, already safe in its liberties, that

the present Sovereign of Great Britain succeeded. But has not the result proved that she brought to the task of governing a free people those qualities which, under the workings of a free constitution, have helped to develope and consolidate that liberty, and, by the divine blessing, keep them great and free. Was it nothing in the interest of good government—was it nothing in the interest of Monarchy itself, that when, a few years ago, in other lands, thrones were shaking and sovereigns there were who by their misrule had brought kingdoms and crowns into peril, the world could look to *one* Royal personage who continued to reign in the affections of her people, because mainly of the personal virtues that distinguished her! And while she gracefully wore her ancestral honours as a Queen, bearing constitutional rule over her people, she was unostentatiously,—almost unconsciously,—presenting to that people the example of a woman faithfully discharging the duties of daily personal life—as a wife, a mother, a friend whose human sympathies have led her into such close contact with her people. Who can think of that pure Court over which our good Queen has, for a quarter of a century, presided—of that happy family she is training in the paths of virtue—of that humble bearing she has shewn in her intercourse with

her people—of her sympathy with them in their sorrows—of her interest in their welfare—of her desire and of her efforts for their good ;—who, I say, can think of the personal claims of such a Queen to the veneration of her people, and not thank God that on so high a platform there should be presented such an example for the good of her people and for the benefit of the world at large ? Who can this of the spectacle thus exhibited of womanly excellence, and fail to see that one sovereign at least there is—and that our own—who seeks to establish her throne by righteousness !

Hence when a first and sore affliction met her in the midst of her high duties, and death entered the royal palace, depriving her of the presence and counsel of a Prince Consort who had so worthily aided her in her high functions as ruler in the land, while the nation mourned over the public calamity, the full tide of the people's spontaneous sympathy was poured on their widowed Queen. And we, who have rejoiced in the prosperity so good a Queen has been instrumental in securing ; who have felt her griefs as if our own, and who are persuaded of the value of so high an example of what is lovely and of good report, may well, as a people thus blessed, be called this day to acknowledge how great has

been the contribution towards the supremacy of goodness in high places, which has been laid by the hands of Queen Victoria on the altar of her country's fame. And well may it be our most fervent prayer for that empire to which we glory to belong, that Britain's throne may ever "be established by righteousness!"

In the promotion of such an object as that of having the throne resting on righteousness, even the humblest individual amongst us may share. He may have had nothing to do with Courts or Cabinets: neither the ability nor the opportunity may have been his of influencing by his advice the national Counsels: the face of his Sovereign he may never have seen: in his own retired neighbourhood he may be all but entirely ignorant of what is happening in the higher departments of State;—but if in that lowly sphere in which he moves he has been adorning the doctrines of God his Saviour—if he has been thus walking humbly with his God; then, in thus presenting to other lowly observers the little history of an unobtrusive life, regulated by the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, he has been helping to lay broader and deeper the foundations of public virtue on which an upright throne may rest. Whatever be the station a man occupies, he may take part in this great

duty which he owes to his country and to his race. Each has a sphere wherein he may labour for the public good. Only let true Religion be the ruling principle that animates you, and the fear of God be ever cherished in your hearts; let all your aims be directed by righteousness, and all your efforts be towards its advancement; and thus you will do your part for the attainment of the common end—of asserting the supremacy of righteousness over all ranks and orders of men in the State.

In the retirement of his own little circle of operations, each one may think that small must be the influence that can flow from his individual aims and efforts—that a righteous action, a self-denying deed done by him, can be but as a drop in the great ocean, to be overwhelmed in the mighty aggregate of the world's proceedings, and thus lost for ever as to any share it can have in developing the national character or maintaining the national integrity. But was it not of such workers of righteousness—humble followers of the great Exemplar—that the commendation was pronounced, “Ye are the salt of the earth?” And of many a humble Christian, but little known beyond his own home-circle, it may be said that, even for the good of his Age and Country, he has not been righteous in vain—that his unobtrusive piety survives in the recollection

of some who were influenced for good by the living example of his faith and patience, and who cherish the remembrance of his excellences when he has gone to his reward, so that "being dead he yet speaketh." Does not a blessed influence surround those who love righteousness and seek its promotion? They are fellow-workers with the great and good of other days, who, in the various departments of Christian effort, have laboured for the spread of truth and godliness among men. In thus letting your light so shine as to glorify your Father in heaven, you shall in your own sphere help to extend the reign of righteousness and to promote the cause of Christ around you; and by the deeds of Christian benevolence to which you are impelled by the principles and precepts of the Gospel, you shall thus, as far at least as your influence and example extend, benefit for time and eternity the community to which you belong. Let the diffusive nature of the Christian religion have thus full and fair play, and from all ranks in the social scale let the example of a healthy piety come with its happy influences for good, and what a spectacle would then be presented! Righteousness exalting the nation higher than earthly glory could do,—“its peace flowing as a river, its righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

